



FEIS INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

What is a Feis?

Feis (pronounced 'fesh') is Gaelic for 'festival'. A feis is a gathering for competition in various aspects of Irish culture like dancing, music, and art. The plural of feis is called feisanna. It is a wonderful opportunity for your dancer to compete. The competitions are set so your child will compete only against others in the same age group and level (i.e. beginner, advance beginner). For your dancer, this is a fun and exciting occasion.

Parents need to know that the Keenan dancers do not move as a group at the Feis and are not under the supervision of the Dance Teacher. Therefore, especially for young dancers, the role of the parent becomes that of "sport manager" (aka "Feis Mom" or "Feis Dad"). For a "feis parent", the experience can be very overwhelming! Parents often learn this role by networking with experienced Feis Moms and Dads. If you don't know someone personally, ask your child's teacher and they will be happy to connect you with another family. Between the dance teacher, a mentor family, and the following information, we want to make the event a little less stressful and a wonderful memorable experience!

What is an Oireachtas?

Pronounced "O-rock-tus", this is a Western Regional Irish Dance Competition and held in varying locations each year. This event is not like an ordinary feis, as entry is by invitation of the dance teacher only. These events are championship level competitions.

How do I sign up for a Feis?

Throughout the year, there will be many opportunities for your dancer to attend a feis.

For the beginner, local feisanna will be the competitions that you will most likely attend. Local feisanna will be announced by Miss Fidelma via email, along with the link to the website for registration. Visit the Upcoming Events Page on the Keenan website for a list of upcoming feisanna. <http://www.keenanirishdanceschool.com>.

The two web sites that generally handle registration for our local feisanna are:

www.feisinfo.com

www.feisworx.com

What level should my dancer enter?

Your dancers "Feis age" is the age they are on January 1st of that year, regardless of when their birthday falls in the year. If they are 8 on January 1st, but have a birthday and turn 9 on January 12th, then your dancer will still be registered in the 8 Year Age level for the entire year. When you enter online, many of the registrations will calculate your dancer's feis age when you enter their birthday.

Many of the competitions have a “First Feis” category. If this is your dancer’s first time competing at a feis, this is the only time they will be allowed to compete at this level. It is fun and exciting for the new dancers and the stage managers at the feis will help your son/daughter through each step of the competition.

After the First Feis, your dancer will be entered in the Beginner 1 category. Once they receive a 1st, 2nd or 3rd place ranking within the Beginner 1 category, they will move up to the Beginner 2 category. The chart below will help you understand when your dancer moves up to the next level:

First Feis:	First time competing at a Feis
Beginner 1:	Place 1st, 2nd or 3rd in a B1 competition, dancer moves up to Beginner 2 in that specific dance.
Beginner 2:	Place 1st or 2nd in a B2 competition, dancer moves up to Novice in that specific dance.
Novice:	Place 1st in any Novice competition, dancer moves up to Prizewinner in that specific dance.

Note: The status of the dancer does not change unless there are 5 or more dancers in a competition.

Advanced dancers will then move to the Championship level and compete in Preliminary and Open levels.

What dances should we enter in?

Miss Fidelma will tell you and your dancer when they are ready for competition and which dances to enter. They will start with soft shoe dances only (Reel, Light Jig, Slip Jig, and Single Jig) and gradually move to the hard shoe dances (Hard Jig, Hornpipe, St. Patrick’s Day) as they progress in class.

What do I need to bring?

Being properly prepared can help everyone enjoy the experience. Packing your “feis bag” the night before can go a long way in the morning! Here are some things that you should consider including:

1. dance shoes (yes, always double check before leaving)
2. poodle socks
3. dance uniform (School dress or beginner Top & Skirt. Vest and pants for boys)
4. money (for vendors and entry fee, if there is one)
5. wig (if wearing one)
6. hair items - comb/brush, rubber bands, bobby pins
7. safety pins
8. sock glue (can usually be purchased at the feis from vendors)
9. black duct tape (for bottom of hard shoes)
10. water bottle and a nutritious snack
11. first aid items (band-aids, moleskin for blisters, pain meds)
12. travel pack of tissues and hand wipes
13. book or other items to entertain during down time between dances.

What should I do when I get to the feis?

- Go to the Registration desk and get the Competitor Number Card
- Look on the back of the card for your dancers competition #'s and stages. (Note about numbers: Your dancer has a personal Competitor Number and each dance has separate competition numbers.)
- Pin or string tie on the number to your child's costume at the waist.
- Go check out the locations of your stages so you have a mental picture of where you need to travel between dance competitions. (see below for how stages work at the feis).
- Find a couple of chairs to place your bags in front of the stage your dancer will be performing on.
- Keep an eye on the stage to see which competition is being performed so you will be ready for your scheduled dance.
- Warm up in an area away from the dance stage and practice your dances a few times.
- Wait for your first dance to begin.

How do the Stages work?

Each stage is numbered or lettered, and each has easel with the number of the competition being held at that stage. As each competition finishes, that number is torn off and the next competition number will be displayed. Younger dancers will generally remain on one stage for all of their competitions.

Our local feisanna generally have 3-5 stages lined up next to each other. Refer to your dancer's registration card for the Stage number and the competition number. You can generally download a schedule from the feis website prior to the feis, or you can purchase a schedule book when you arrive at the feis.

If you have questions about or issues with what is going on, try to find an older Keenan dancer/parent, your teacher, or speak politely to the stage manager. NEVER speak to the judge or musician.

What should my dancer do when it's their turn to compete?

Have your dancer check in with the stage manager when their competition number is up on the board. You will see that dances are generally grouped together on the schedule. For example: Beginner 1 soft shoe solos might be listed as competitions #101-104 and will begin at 8:30am. If your dancer is scheduled for any of the dances in this number range, they should go up to the stage manager and check in before dance 101 starts. Be prepared for competitions to start earlier than listed on the schedule. The feis continues in order even if they finish a category early. It is recommended that your dancer be ready to dance at least one hour prior to their scheduled time.

Your dancer should look confident and proud walking onto the stage. Good form and posture helps with the judge's impression of your dancer. Check your dancer's shoelaces before going on stage! Double knots are highly recommended.

Sometimes there are more children than can fit across the stage in one line. Therefore, a second and even third line behind the first may be formed on or off the stage.

Dancers perform together 2 or 3 at the same time. Remind your child that dancers from the same school are not to stand next to each other because two children with the same steps should not dance together. Don't be surprised if your dancer is not doing the same steps as the person dancing with him/her.

The dancer should stand in line with their feet crossed, shoulders back and lengthened spinal posture with a

nice big smile!

When it is your dancer's turn to compete, they should step forward and to the left or right to allow some space between dancers. For beginners and advance beginners, the stage managers will help guide the dancer with this part.

Next --Try to smile. Stand with feet crossed and with good posture. The stage manager will give them the signal of when to start. When their dance is complete, they should make sure they are facing the judge. Give a nice, deep bow with a great big SMILE and walk back into line.

When the entire line has finished, they will exit the stage and the next line will form. The dancer should walk off the stage with good posture.

How do we know the results of the competition?

- Go to the Results board, which is usually in a different area or room, generally where the registration desk was located.
- The results are posted around 30 minutes to 1 hour after the competition is over.
- The results are posted on separate papers with the competition number on top.
- Look for your dancer's competition number(s) and then look for your dancer's personal Competitor number to see if they have placed first, second, and third. Placers are listed by competitor number, so make sure you have your number handy.
- If your dancer number is listed, they have placed in this dance!
- Go to the Trophy Secretary and show them your dancer's competitor number.
- Most beginner prizes are medals, not trophies. Some feis competitions award multiple first, second and third places, some only give out one prize for each place. Still others award one first, but multiple second and third places.

If you would like to have the specific judges comments and your dancer's scores, most feisanna have a place to obtain your dancer's specific results. This information will be given or mailed to you for an additional charge. You can compare your dancer's actual score to the scores of the top dancers in that competition. Don't be surprised if there are not a lot of notes listed. The judges do not have much time to add comments for each dancer.

Other Notes

No videotaping is allowed. Still photography without flash is sometimes permitted. Check the rules of each feis before using photography.

Because of the nature of the feis, your dance teacher cannot see everyone in every competition, but they will try as best as they can. Parents, please try to remember that the feis is long and busy day for everyone. It is NOT usually the best forum for a long talk about your child's performance, or other matters not relevant to the events at hand. The right time to discuss the day's events would be during a break in dance class. You can also email your child's teacher to arrange a time for a discussion.

Do I really have to curl my child's hair? And what about the wigs?

It is not an official rule that the girls' hair be curled, but it is rather standard in Irish dance competitions. The judge is looking for a neat appearance: neat hair, clean socks, clean uniform, etc. Miss Fidelma will tell you when your dancer is ready for an Irish Dance Wig at the competitions.

For advice on how to securely attach the wig, ask other Keenan parents for their methods. Depending on the length of your dancer's hair, will determine the best method to secure a wig. You will also receive instructions with the wig purchase.

There are also many resources online for methods to attach a wig. A quick search on YouTube will give you many sources for instruction.

If you are planning to curl your daughter's own hair, here are few pointers that will help:

- Set your dancer's hair the night before a feis.
- Slightly dirty hair holds the curl better. Don't wash the hair right before curling.
- Use soft sponge curls, or twisty curls that will be comfortable to sleep on.
- Apply a generous amount of a hair gel or mousse to each section before wrapping it around a curler. Smaller sections will result in smaller curls. Segment out the hair according to your preferred style.
- Positioning each curler VERTICAL to your dancer, not horizontal, will give the correct spring curl on the hair.
- Keep the curlers in your dancer's hair until they arrive at the feis. Unroll each curler and smooth each curl, DO NOT brush the curls. Add your dancer's headband and give her hair a good spray with a flexible style hair spray to help the hold.

Resources for Feis Supplies:

Wigs: Youngblood Haircutters: www.IrishWigs.com
(Miss Fidelma will tell you what color and style is best for your dancer)

Dresses: Kay Gilmore 707-938-3877 (located in Sonoma)

Shoes & Socks: Irish Treasures: www.irishtreasures.com (They are also generally a vendor at local Feis competitions).